

The Mustard Seed and Other Lessons From Agriculture

Lesson # 24: (Mt. 13:31-32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18-19; COL 76-89)

In this lesson we will study the Parable of the Mustard Seed which is one of several recorded in Matthew 13. We will also study various Bible texts which employ agriculture to teach spiritual lessons. Ellen White has repeatedly stated that agriculture should be one of the main subjects in the curriculum of our Seventh-day Adventist schools. This lesson will help us understand better why the Lord's servant felt so strongly about this. Let's begin our study by taking a look at the people to whom the parable was particularly addressed.

The Original Recipients

1. What particular group was Jesus speaking to in the parable of the mustard seed? "In the multitude that _____ to Christ's teaching there were many _____." (COL 76)
2. What question did the Pharisees have in mind concerning Jesus? "Without _____, power, or _____, how was he to establish the new _____." (COL 77)
3. What could the people see as Jesus told this parable? "As Jesus spoke this parable, the mustard plant could be _____ far and near, lifting itself above the _____ and grain, and waving its _____ lightly in the air. _____ flitted from twig to twig, and _____ amid the leafy foliage." (COL 77)

Earthly Kingdoms

1. With what could Jesus **not** compare His kingdom and why? "No _____ society could afford Him a symbol. . . . Its _____ of development are the _____ of those that rule the kingdoms of this world." (COL 77)
2. What method do earthly kingdoms employ to gain and keep power? With what does the Holy Spirit compare them? "Earthly governments prevail by physical _____; they maintain their dominion by _____. . . . The Holy Spirit represents _____ kingdoms under the symbol of fierce _____ of prey." (COL 77)

Note: Daniel 7 is a prime example of fierce beasts being used as symbols of ravenous earthly kingdoms. On the other hand, the principles of God's kingdom are illustrated by the domestic beasts used in the sanctuary service.

3. What type of kingdom did the Jews of Christ's day look for? "The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the _____ way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to _____ measures. They devised methods and _____." (COL 77)

4. When Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, what did the Jews attempt to do? “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by _____, to make him a _____, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” (Jn. 6:15)
5. **Thought Question:** Is there a parallel between the type of kingdom the Jews wished to establish and the kind of kingdom that the religious right wants to implant in the United States?

Christ’s Kingdom

1. What is symbolized by the seed? “The seed is the _____ of God.” (Lk. 8:11)
1. How is true righteousness established in Christ’s kingdom? “But Christ _____ a principle. By _____ truth and righteousness, He _____ error and sin.” (COL 77)
2. Where must Christ’s kingdom be established before it can cover the world? “The kingdom of God cometh not with _____: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! For behold, the _____ of God is _____ you.” (Lk. 17:21)

Note: When Jesus implants the principles of His kingdom in the hearts of His subjects, the result will be peace on earth and good will toward men. What cannot be gained by force will be gained by the silent work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

3. What did Jesus once say to Pontius Pilate? “My kingdom is not of this _____. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants _____, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but _____ is my kingdom not of this world.” (Jn. 18:36)
4. Which other parable of Jesus teaches the same lesson about the kingdom? The parable of the _____ (Mt. 13:33)
5. What **corporate lesson** is illustrated by the smallness of the mustard seed and the largeness of the bush? “When Christ spoke this parable, there were only a _____ Galilean peasants to represent the new _____. . . . But the mustard seed was to _____ and spread forth its branches throughout the whole _____.” (COL 78)

Note: The apostle Paul told the Colossians that the gospel was “preached to every creature under heaven” (Col. 1:23). In a matter of a few decades, the gospel which began with a humble carpenter and twelve unlettered peasants, had spread to the whole world.

6. What **individual lesson** does the parable of the mustard seed teach? “So the work of _____ in the heart is _____ in its beginning. A word is spoken, a ray of light is shed into the _____, and influence is exerted that is the beginning of the new life; and who can _____ its results?” (COL 78)

7. Which four persons are referred to by Ellen White as examples of the growth of the mustard seed and why? (COL 78-79)

- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____

Why?: _____

7. Where are the special truths for this time found? “As in earlier ages, the special truths for this time are found, not with the _____ authorities, but with men and women who are not too _____ or too _____ to believe the word of God.” (COL 79)

8. When will the parable of the mustard seed reach its glorious and complete fulfillment? “And in this _____ generation the parable of the mustard seed is to reach a signal and triumphant fulfillment. The little _____ will become a _____.” (COL 79)

Divine Power and Human Effort

1. How does agriculture teach the law of divine-human cooperation? “There can be no reaping unless the _____ hand acts its part in the sowing of the _____. But without the agencies God provides in giving _____ and _____, dew clouds, there would be no _____.” (COL 82)

2. What great truth did the apostle Paul utter to the Corinthians? “We are _____ together with _____.” (I Cor. 3:9)

3. How does divine-human cooperation in the natural realm illustrate divine-human cooperation in the spiritual realm? “Thus it is in _____ things, in the formation of the _____, and in every line of Christian work. We have a part to _____, but we must have the power of _____ to unite with us, or our efforts will be in vain.” (COL 82)

4. How does the importance of human effort compare with the importance of divine power? “Immeasurably _____ is the part which the human agent sustains; but if he is _____ with the divinity of Christ, he can do _____ things through the strength that _____ imparts.” (COL 82)

5. **Thought Question:** How do the stories of Sampson, the conquest of Jericho and the battle of David and Goliath and the miraculous fishing expedition illustrate the importance of divine-human cooperation? Can you think of other Biblical stories which illustrate the same principle?

Child Training

1. What can we learn from the gradual development of a plant? “The gradual development of the plant from the _____ is an object lesson in _____ training.” (COL 82)
2. Who’s life does the development of a plant perfectly exemplify? “But at each _____ of His _____ He was perfect, with the simple, natural _____ of a sinless life.” (COL 83)
3. What must parents not do with their children? “It is not wise to give them special _____, and repeat their clever _____ before them. Vanity should not be _____ by praising their _____, their _____, or their actions. Nor should they be _____ in an expensive and showy manner.” (COL 83)

Note: Some parents complain that Ellen White goes overboard with this counsel. They state that children should be publicly recognized and exhibited in order to bolster their self-esteem or self-image. What would you say to such parents?

4. What special care should be taken in the education of children? “The little ones should be educated in childlike _____. . . . Childhood answers to the _____ in the parable, and the blade has a beauty peculiarly its own. The children should not be _____ into a precocious _____ but should retain as long as possible the freshness and _____ of their early years.” (COL 84).

Note: What do you think this tells us about the age at which the little ones should be sent to school? Do you think that parents are perhaps rushing their children into formal education before their physical and mental skills are ready for it? How important do you think it is for mom to stay at home and cultivate her small children?

5. How much does God expect of little children? “The little children may be _____, having an experience in accordance with their _____. This is all that God expects of them.” (COL 84)

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

1. What unerring law of nature applies also to spiritual things? “In the laws of God in nature, _____ follows _____ with unerring certainty. . . . So in spiritual things; the faithfulness of every worker is _____ by the results of his work” (COL 84)
2. What did Paul express this unerring law? “Be not _____; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man _____, that shall he also _____.” (Gal. 6:7)
3. In the end, who is responsible for the destruction of the wicked? “God _____ no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed _____. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of _____ is sowing seeds of _____ and these will produce a sure harvest.” (COL 84)
4. How did this law apply to the experience of Pharaoh? “By _____ the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old _____ the seeds of obstinacy, and he _____ obstinacy.” (COL 85)
5. How does this law apply in our relationships with others? “In our relation to others, this law holds true. Every _____, every _____, is a seed that will bear fruit. Every deed of thoughtful _____, of obedience, or of self-denial, will _____ itself in others, and through them in still _____.” (COL 85)

The Lesson of Liberality

1. What other great lesson is taught in seed sowing? “_____ both is spiritual and in temporal things is _____ in the lesson of seed sowing.” (COL 85)
2. How did the apostle Paul express this great principle? “This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall _____ also sparingly; and he which soweth _____ shall reap also bountifully.” (II Cor. 9:6)
3. Does liberality impoverish the giver? “The sower _____ his seed by casting it _____. So it is with those who are faithful in _____ God’s gifts. By imparting they _____ their blessings. God has promised them a sufficiency that they may _____ to give.” (COL 86)
4. What did Luke have to say about the law of liberality? “Give, and it shall be _____ unto you; good measure, pressed down, and _____ together, and running _____, shall men give into your bosom.” (Lk. 6:38)
5. What happens when we distribute our temporal blessings? “As we distribute God’s temporal blessings, the _____ of our love and sympathy awakens in the receiver gratitude and _____ to God. The soil of the heart is _____ to receive the seeds of _____ truth.” (COL 86)

Death Which Leads to Life

1. What great truth did Jesus seek to teach regarding Himself in John 12:24? “So the death of Christ will result in _____ for the kingdom of God. In accordance with the law of the _____ kingdom, life will be the result of His death.” (COL 86)
2. What experience must we share with Christ? “And all who would bring forth _____ as workers together with Christ must first fall into the _____ and die. . . . Self-love, self-interest, must _____. But the law of _____ is the law of self-preservation.” (COL 86)
3. What other lesson is taught by the death and germination of the seed? What text does Ellen White provide to corroborate her statement? “The seed dies to spring forth into new life, and in this we are taught the lesson of the _____.” (COL 87)

The Importance of Agriculture

1. List 5 lessons that parents and teachers can share with children from the science of agriculture: (COL 87)
 - ▶ _____
 - ▶ _____
 - ▶ _____
 - ▶ _____
 - ▶ _____
2. How vital is the science of agriculture in our schools? “They [the youth] should be taught to till the soil. It would be well if there were, connected with _____ school, lands for cultivation. Such lands should be regarded as God’s own _____. The things of nature should be looked upon as a lesson _____ which His children are to study, and from which they may obtain knowledge as to the culture of the _____.” (COL 88)

The Importance of Hard Work

1. What lesson can we learn from the hard work of tilling th soil? “Earnestness, diligence, and persevering _____ are to be put forth in treating the soil _____ to sowing the seed. So it is in the _____ work in the human heart.” (COL 88)
2. What is the ultimate lesson we can learn from tilling the soil? “While the human sower is planting the seed to sustain our _____ life, the Divine Sower will plant in the soul the seed that will bring forth _____ unto life everlasting.” (COL 89)

